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# THE RED CROSS

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IN CHARGE OF

JANE A. DELANO, R.N.

*Chairman of the National Committee on Red Cross Nursing Service*

## RED CROSS TOWN AND COUNTRY NURSING SERVICE

At a recent meeting of the Committee on Town and Country Nursing, it was voted to include as members representatives of the three national organizations of nurses, representatives nominated by their respective organizations. Those appointed were Mathild H. Krueger, of the American Nurses Association, M. Adelaide Nutting, of the National League for Nursing Education, and Ella Phillips Crandall, of the National Organization for Public Health Nursing. Other new members have also been added to the Committee, which now includes the following: Mrs. Whitelaw Reid, chairman; Jane A. Delano, vice-chairman; Mabel T. Boardman, Lillian D. Wald, Annie W. Goodrich, Mrs. William K. Draper, Mr. John M. Glenn, Mr. Wickliffe Rose, Dr. Winford Smith, Dr. J. W. Schereschewsky, Mathild H. Krueger, M. Adelaide Nutting, Ella Phillips Crandall, Edna L. Foley, Professor Thomas N. Carver, Mrs. Larz Anderson and Mrs. Willard Straight.

Hundreds of inquiries regarding the Red Cross plan for extending visiting nursing to the smaller communities of the United States have been received. Although most of these have come from sections east of the Mississippi, California, Washington, Montana, and other far western states have shown interest in this activity. Virginia at present has four Red Cross visiting nurses, three of whose affiliated organizations have been formed within the past six months.

The beginning of rural nursing by one of these organizations, from the viewpoint of the Red Cross visiting nurse, in a community where it was new to all, is described in excerpts from letters quoted as follows:

Arriving at the . . . station, I was met by our local president, and taken to her home as a guest. I spent two delightful days learning comfortably the various names and locations of villages before assuming full professional responsibilities. The president herself drove me through the several districts, introducing me to the people, who gave me a very warm welcome because of the good work already done by a nurse in the village who had been specializing a case of pellagra.

The idea of having a permanent rural nurse is only two weeks old and the first mass meeting was held the Sunday before I arrived, at which an Executive Board and Committee on Ways and Means were created. Together they have worked out an enthusiasm which has already accomplished much of the advanced work of their association. Six villages, all within a five or six-mile radius, are included within the visiting area.

The dearest little bungalow of four rooms and bath, in perfect condition, has been placed at my disposal and I am to move into it on the first of the month. I can hardly wait, it looks so inviting.

A few weeks later she writes:

On the afternoon of the first I began to carry over some of my personal effects into the new home to make ready for my friend who was to come and live with me and bring "Buster," her beautiful dog. . . . After her arrival we were just beginning to get things in order when I felt obliged to bring home a dying baby. We have had him eleven days and I wish you could see him! He is blooming like the rest of the fall flowers. It is needless to add we are still not quite settled. Everyone is so interested in our work and this baby that I am interrupted by many callers. I have twenty-eight patients on roll, all doing well, except one little boy, a year old, with spinal meningitis, whom the doctors gave up last week. Still he lingers and I am working hard to pull him through.

The local association has provided me with a very pretty saddle horse with a new buggy and harness, and I have averaged from fifteen to eighteen miles a day on the road most of the time since. My horse is all one could wish and the public seem very proud of the whole outfit.

There is big work to be done here. I only hope I shall prove big enough to do it well. It is developing rapidly and even now I have just as much as I can comfortably do. One of the doctors even went so far as to have a child brought from a distant section so that I could attend him. He is now in a cottage, just back of the doctor's house, and they come for me to go there, making a drive of six or seven miles. It is such a joy to help them. This air is so wonderful I have not felt fatigue, no matter how hard I have worked. A doctor sent me a case today from West Virginia, and another brought me a little boy, asking if I would keep him for a couple of days and give rectal treatment preparatory to an operation for prolapsed bowels, to be done in Richmond. Don't you think this quite a "feather in our cap," for we are not yet quite three months old?

On the same subject at a later date, she writes:

Yes, I am working hard, but with so much comfort, it isn't hurting me. I have worked just as hard so many times before under such great difficulties, with so much less recognition and appreciation, that I feel able to move mountains if given time. . . . You can see how hard it is not to be too ambitious when every effort seems to bring such good results.

I attended an operation last Friday very unexpectedly. A two months' miscarriage was brought on by lifting a tub of wash-water. The last baby was only six months old yesterday and there are four others, the oldest a girl of seven. The mother is twenty-four years old today. This little family lives in two rooms and a loft. There seems to be no relative whom they can call upon (and can't pay a stranger) so the father is at home this week. I hope God will send him an extra

blessing, for the type he represents is rare. He did the confinement washing!!! He gets the three meals for the five children and his wife, waits on the mother, when I am not there, as carefully and tenderly as any woman. I've given as much time to them as I could, going every day, sometimes making two or three visits in a day. Today being Sunday I had extra time, so tried to help him out on some of his house-work by cleaning my patient's room and killing a few thousand flies. Have ordered two screen doors and tomorrow I shall carry with me some tacks and net to cover the windows. All this is such a new experience in any household in this neighborhood! One little old woman coming in to observe the "queer doings" exclaimed, "Oh my! She has a white bed," because I had put a sheet over the old red bedding for a spread. I wish you could have looked in upon the satisfied smile of the mother when she saw me return to the floor a couple of isolated pieces of carpet! No art squares ever gave greater pleasure.

My first mothers' talk received quite a puff, but it isn't inflating me any, for I realize I am a new toy and not likely to last when I "bunk up" against some of the things before me in my fight for better living conditions.

From an account in the local newspaper, which included the lecture in full, to which reference is made, the introductory paragraph is here given:

The first series of talks on personal hygiene and health for children was delivered on the 10th by Miss \_\_\_\_\_, the Red Cross nurse, before a class made up of a score or more of mothers who are members of the \_\_\_\_\_ Nursing Association. This is the first of the six villages composing the Association to take advantage of Miss \_\_\_\_\_'s services in this direction, and Chairman \_\_\_\_\_ of that district is to be congratulated on the success of his efforts in organizing the class.

In a later issue of the same paper appeared this announcement:

The Recreation Club at \_\_\_\_\_, which was organized some weeks ago . . . . is to extend its field of activity by forming a Sewing Guild. The members of the Guild are to meet one evening a week at the club rooms . . . . to make such garments as the Red Cross nurse finds are needed by any of her patients in the district. The garments they make are not to be given away, but will be sold at the cost of the materials, but it will enable those who do not have time to do the sewing, to provide themselves in case of emergencies with such supplies at a moderate cost. At the first meeting Miss \_\_\_\_\_ is to give a short talk on the needs and care of infants, which is appropriate, as the garments they will make will be principally those for infants.

The beginning of her work in the schools, the nurse describes as follows:

On the 19th, an address preparing the children for the nurse's school work was given in the \_\_\_\_\_ High School. The children were most attentive and readily adopted the school slogan "Health, Education, Loyal Public Service," proving we shall enroll many little (H.E.L.P.S.) helps during the spring term. The triangle was unanimously accepted as their symbol of right living and

many little hands were raised in the pledge to try and build their lives along the lines of Loving Motives, True Methods and Life-Giving Results.

A community Christmas tree, dressed and presented by the Recreation Club, to the children of ————— was a great success for young and old. Over one hundred little ones grouped around the big tree, each happy little face turned toward the many colored lights, was a memorable sight good to see. Generous donations from absent friends made it possible to give each child a cornucopia of candy and an orange with his game or toy, and some received also useful gifts, such as coats, caps, mittens, gloves, etc. The officiating hostess (the Red Cross nurse) made a ten-minute address of welcome in which she said: "Four weeks before we celebrated our Thanksgiving for the material good things of the earth, but Christmas went one step further, because it expressed love in giving, which being interpreted means service. Long years ago God, the Father, gave the world the gift of His Son. That is why on our Lord's birthday we like to make gifts to those whom we love and would serve. We can't love without giving, not always gifts bought with money, often kind thoughts and loving deeds." As an example of service she told the story of "Why the Chimes Rang."

Even the babies were most flattering in their interest and quiet. Dear old Grandma Swenvson, seventy-four years old, said many satisfying things concerning her enjoyment and profit from the afternoon's fun, notwithstanding the long difficult climb up and down muddy hills, and we have heard from other sources recently that a little boy who carried home a box of paints has developed a lasting passion for the fine arts, and a little girl of seven, presented with a sad-iron, has become her mother's chief laundress.

After all that has been said and much still untold, the greatest work this nurse is accomplishing cannot be recorded in words, for owing to their nature, certain results are incalculable. Yet the confidence placed in her efficiency as a nurse, the dependence of young and old upon her guidance in everyday family affairs, and the devotion of the entire community bear enduring evidence to the place she is filling in the community life. What more splendid opportunity than this could any nurse desire!